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Dead Trees Have
Life!



Chattahoochee-Oconee
National Forests

Forest
Service



Southern
Region

United States Department of Agriculture

Animals Need Dead Trees Too...

Woodsmen, spare that snag! When a tree dies due to disease, damage, or any number of possible causes, its "life" is far from over. Dead trees or snags are hosts to many species of wildlife. Saving these trees where possible can be very beneficial. These benefits extend not only to snag inhabitants but to all of us.

Woodpeckers are primary excavators of hard snags or snags with sound wood and many branches left. Downy red-headed, and pileated woodpeckers as well as common flickers drill snags to construct their gourd-shaped nest holes. Hairy woodpeckers prefer the dead or dying branches of living trees.



About 75 percent of these drillers' diet consists of insects. The birds cling to trunks and branches with their strong toes using their straight, hard bills to chisel out beetle grubs or flake loose bark in search of insect cocoons and eggs.

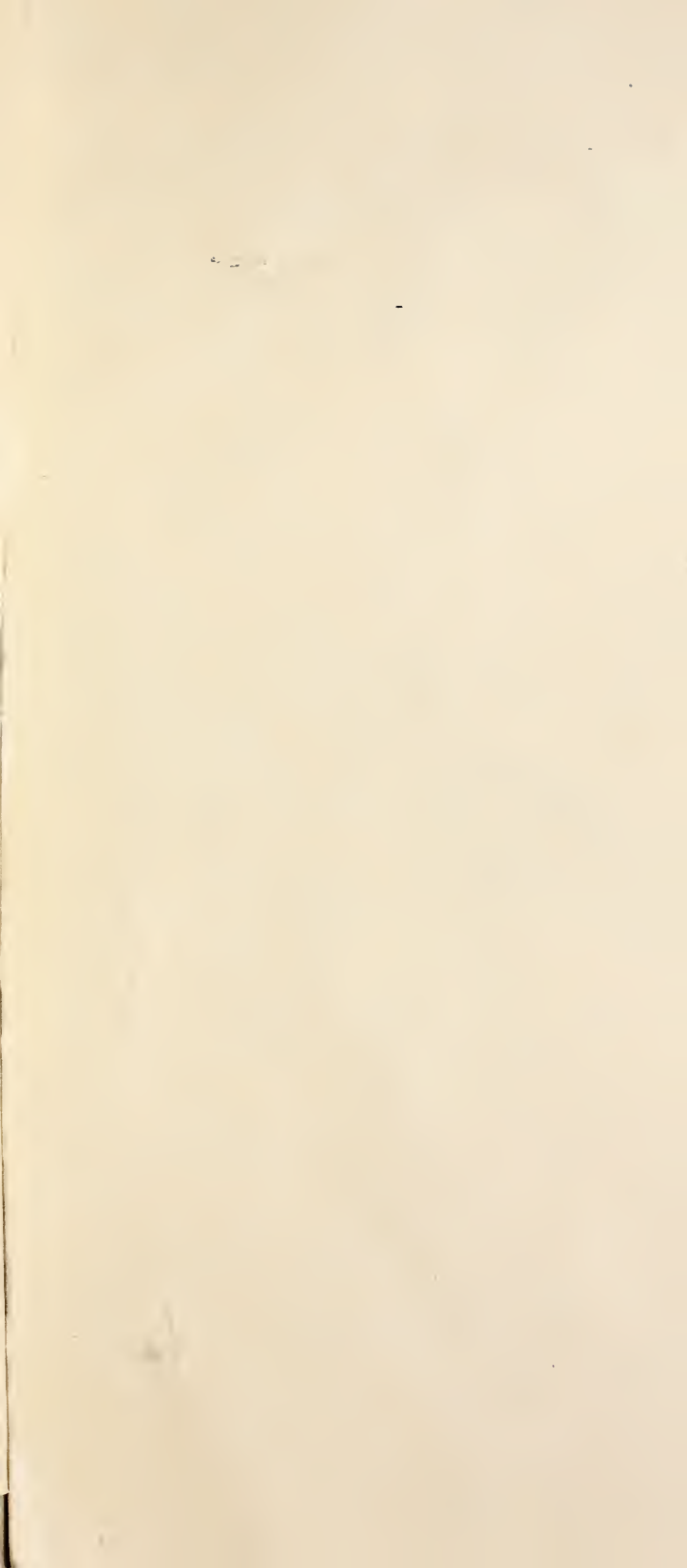
Many destructive insects are consumed, such as the southern pine beetle, click beetle, woodborer, pine weevil, carpenter ant, tent caterpillar, gypsy and coddling moths, chinch bug, aphid, grasshopper, and spider. There is evidence that woodpeckers and other insect predators help control outbreaks of some insect populations.

Carolina chickadees will hack out nest cavities in soft snags in a late stage of decay, but like many other species of birds, they nest in abandoned woodpecker holes and natural cavities in dead trees. Wood ducks, sparrow hawks, screech owls, tufted titmice, white-breasted nuthatches, and bluebirds are all secondary users of old woodpecker residences and cavities caused by decay and disease.

Snags provide more than homes and roost sites for birds. Fungi, mosses, and lichens grow on the decomposing wood. Insects chew and bore their way through the tree, providing food for woodpeckers, shrews, fence lizards, and even bears. Mice, flying squirrels, and raccoons den in dead trees. Bats, voracious consumers of insects, hide under the loose bark.

As the tree decays further and falls, its usefulness is not ended. Decomposition continues and it provides burrowing space for small mammals and some reptiles.





The skink and ringnecked snakes consume grubs, worms, and resident bugs. If the log is hollow, skunks, opossums, and rabbits may use it for shelter. Further breakdown yields rich woodland soil that nourishes the entire system of plant and animal life.

Most animals prefer snags rather than handmade structures for their homes, but too many people think snags are ugly or dangerous and cut them down. If a dead tree isn't a threat to your house or property, consider leaving it. Look for ways to use it in your landscape. Be an Animal Innkeeper.

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**PLEASE,
DON'T CUT TREES WITH:**



● Paint marks

Wildlife signs ●



● Broken tops

Trunk holes ●
or visible nests



THANKS FOR YOUR HELP

